

ATLAS! Africa Concepts

1. Physical geography holds back the economic success of the continent.

- **CLIMATE** (mirror images on either side of the Equator)
 - Desert in the North & Southwest
 - Rain forest in the center.
 - Tropical diseases
- **SOILS**
 - Not very fertile; depleted, arid
 - most good land used for cash crops (e.g. tea, coffee, cotton)
- **RAINFALL**
 - unpredictable, makes for feast or famine
- **DESERTIFICATION** (fertile land turning into desert)
 - CAUSE overgrazing by sheep and cattle
 - CAUSE slash & burn agriculture, shifting agriculture
 - CAUSE overpopulation
- **LIMITED RIVER NAVIGATION**
 - Rivers have early falls and rapids or cataracts
 - ↳ poor transportation & shipping ability

slash & burn: Forests are cut and burned to clear land for planting.

shifting: use a site to grow crops for a year or two only - then switch sites.

• Due to Arab trade routes across the Sahara and the Indian Ocean, Islam spread throughout the region.

- A small but determined minority wants to overthrow governments and create Islamic States (i.e. rule of law is determined by the Koran). Examples include Libya and Sudan.

3. European countries determined most of Africa's political boundaries.

- Europe divided Africa at the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference. Africans were not consulted.
- The main concern for Europeans was to find and develop Africa's natural resources for use by Europe's economies, to use farm land for growing cash crops, and to use the people for inexpensive labor. (exploitation)
- Ethnic groups with little in common or frequent conflict were placed together.
- Many countries are landlocked.
- Natural boundaries were often ignored.
- Climate patterns were ignored.
- Trade routes, patterns of movement & migration ignore the national boundaries.
- Ethnic tensions have come about as a result of strange boundaries. Tribal identity is more important than national identity.
- The presence of one ethnicity in multiple countries may help cause wars.
- European countries have intervened numerous times in the internal affairs of the countries (with and without permission).

4. The continent is not industrialized. Countries struggle with the problems faced by any developing region

- Cities are growing rapidly. Most new residents live in urban slums without jobs.
- Most people live in rural areas as subsistence farmers with limited education and health care (75% of the Sub-Saharan population).
- Poor health care, short life expectancies, high population growth rates and high infant mortalities are common.
- Most of the world's lowest per capita incomes are in Africa.
- Some particularly gruesome problems include
 - Famine
 - Kwashiorkor (malnutrition)
 - Sleeping Sickness (Tsetse fly)
 - River Blindness
 - Malaria
 - Tuberculosis
 - Parasites
 - HIV/AIDS
- Countries which have the potential to be engines of economic development due to good location, resources, and large populations include:

REGION	COUNTRY	CHALLENGES
North Africa	Egypt	terrorism, climate
West Africa	Nigeria	corruption, diversity, military
Central Africa	D.R. Congo	climate, rain forest, corruption, diversity
East Africa	Ethiopia	diversity, regional conflicts, drought
Southern Africa	South Africa	history

5. Africa trades with the world, although it receives little benefit from the trade and the trade patterns reflects its colonial history.

(as opposed to food crops)

- Most countries export one or two crops. They have cash crop or plantation economies.
- Most exports are raw materials and unfinished products.
- Most imports are expensive finished products (e.g. television, cars).
- Most countries continue to trade with their former colonial master whereas they do not trade with their neighboring countries! European development of the infrastructure was designed to help move goods to the coast and then out of the country. Roads and rail links were not designed to help develop regional trade.

6. Africa is rich in natural resources.

- Africa is a treasure house of minerals (e.g. oil, gold, diamonds, uranium).
- Resources are unevenly distributed (e.g. oil in Nigeria, gold in South Africa).
- Most of this mineral wealth is exported to the developed economies of the Northern Hemisphere (i.e. Western Europe, US, Canada, Japan).
- Africa's rivers are a potentially valuable source of hydroelectric power.